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THEISM AS AN INTELLECTUAL POLITY.

THIS essay is the residuum of a number of abortive attempts to outline a sort of generalized *Mécanique Céleste*.

Incitations to such attempts have come from a number of sources, in some cases there are definite causes of failure, but for the criticism of the attempt in its generality, I depend on what I have formulated as the 'Principle of Ineffectuality.'

I mention some of the starting points because they contain and explain various suggestions of which I have made use. St. Thomas Aquinas's "Gravitas est quidam amor naturalis," Dante's "Love that moves the sun and the other stars." From Herbart the idea of ideas as attracting, repelling, combining, cohering, and as having inertia, mass, momentum—this suggests paralleling the molecular and molar parts of my *mécanique* to the molecular and molar astronomies. Again it is a matter of the history of each one of our private worlds that it has been evolved from a primitive neutral continuum, in the course of which evolution, matter and mind, time and space, and their contents have become differentiated. This suggests beginning a synthetic Philosophy earlier than Herbert Spencer began his, so as to present the differentiation and coördinate evolution of matter and of mind in such a way as to homologate the more stable in the physical with the more satisfactory in the ideal order. Spinoza's *conatus* by which everything strives to maintain its being¹ will take the place in this philosophy of the persistence of force. Lastly, starting from the notion of a primitive, continuum, your mind and my mind will not appear to be the separate things they appear as to ossified common sense, nor will past and present (obtained as they are by a differentiation) be so sharply opposed.

I am accordingly going to take for granted that the hard, solipsistic, self-sufficient attitude of mind is wrong and that the sympathetic, receptive, docile, reverential attitude is right. The

¹ *Ethics*, Part III, Prop. 7.

beliefs or the unbeliefs which a man finds in possession in the time and place in which he happens to be born have a *prima facie* claim on his allegiance. There is a duty of loyalty to time as well as to place. The *Laudator temporis acti* is first cousin to the 'friend of every country but his own.' These loyalties enlarge the mind more than they burden it, they make us beneficiaries of a larger experience and citizens of an ampler world.

This is not to compromise the rights of reason, it is rather to implement these with a language and an imagery. Also, what I urge the claims of is not a subsumptive syllogistic appeal to the '*locus ab auctoritate*,' but a yielding by way of sympathetic identification of the individual mind to the common mind. My ultimate ground of justification—one deeply woven into the texture of my thesis—is that the logical center of a man's mind is not coincident with the center of his particular self-consciousness.

Levels of Apperception (these may also be called intensities of intellectual potential or planes of mind).

1. At some times one can grasp more distinctions within the unity of an idea than at other times. Sometimes one knows what Plato meant by calling the Philosopher "spectator of all time and of all existence," but other times one shrinks into the dull, hopeless, momentary, apathetic life of an animal. Sometimes one can take in a theory at a glance in, as it seems, all its developments and ramifications. At other times one can in a sense understand it sentence by sentence, but can retain no synthetic view of it as a whole.

2. It follows that the same symbolism (verbal or mental imagery) can for one man at one time support a greater, in the sense of a more complex, richer, world than for another man, or for the same man at another time. Thus for instance, for a religious genius, the judgment of 'God is love,' integrated in the concept 'God-as-love,' may sustain a world within which the 'real' world of mechanistic natural science lies 'like a foolish wilful dream;' for another man who also, as he could claim, understands and believes this dogma, it may be just a curious scrap of information altogether on a level with 'sugar is white.'

Therefore I lay it down that (a) *the meaning of a proposition is the content of the world it sustains*;¹ (b) a proposition is truer in proportion as it sustains a greater world; (c) two or more propositions which (or *so far as* they) sustain the same world are the same proposition expressed in different notations; (d) the truest creed for the standard human mind will be that symbolism which by reason of its co-naturality or congruity with the natural nisus of the human mind enables it to sustain the greatest world with the least expenditure out of its limited fund of intellectual force.² Such a creed I contend is that which thinks the Ultimate under the form of spirit, conceived as the aseity towards which the world of nature and of the society of men converges as towards its ideal limit in proportion as it is made perfect, *i. e.*, developed ordinately in knowledge, love, will, and all other characters.

Levels of Apperception are arrests in a continuum. There is therefore no special importance about distinguishing the stages. Spinoza's 'opinion,' 'reason,' 'intuition,' will serve all purposes of illustration. To illustrate the relation of the higher levels to the lower, compare the nature of knowledge to the artist's idea and the lower levels to less successful expressions of it, or compare with the progressive mastery of idea over matter as displayed in a series of flint implements arranged in order of date.

Knowledge I take to be a projection of the real in a special medium, namely, relativity. Reality is known so far as it is symbolized, *i. e.*, *re-presented* as a system of functions. 'That than which a greater cannot be conceived,' is a perfect system of unobstructed relativity.

Desire and Action.—We can only love and will according to our knowledge. Accordingly, the grades of love and will correspond with the grades of knowledge. When we know the particular, we love and will the particular, but in proportion as we rise in knowledge, we rise towards loving and willing *sub specie aeternitatis*. Neither can we truly know the eternal unless we, affected with

¹ *E. g.*, Heraclitus—"It is death to souls to become water" and many more dark sayings as explained in Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*.

² What we have to solve is a housewife's problem—to make a limited fund of intellectual force go as far as possible.

the appropriate forms of love and will, *love and will it*. This is not to compromise but to expand and realize knowledge.

The Immediate or Datum of each grade of knowledge is the summation of all lower grades. Thus each grade has its own proper and characteristic immediate. There is not one given world common to the man of science and the mystic, the saint, and the sensualist, the poet and the money grabber, except in so far as they participate in one mind. Knowledge, Love, and Will are coördinate forms of conation. Knowledge is cosmothetic. Love and Will are charged with inseparable knowledge and tend to expand into worlds of felicity and holiness. Purity of heart, clarity of head, rectitude of will, tend to converge or reintegrate because they are all modes of 'the infinite intellect of God,' hence it is that the 'pure in heart shall see God,' and that 'qui facit veritatem venit ad lucem,' that 'the great Poets are the great Metaphysicians,'¹ that 'thoughts condense into purposes and purposes into acts.'

The identity of the subject depends on the identity of its world; so far as a man has more than one world he has more than one mind. So far as several men have the same world they have one mind. A mind is a complex idea (or it may be a complex of ideas). Its activity is the activity of its ideas, its conation their conation. An idea is a menticule, *i. e.*, it is to mind as molecule is to body. It does not follow from this kind of complexity that either mind or body is not a true unity.

Degradation is the state of existence of contents which naturally belong to a higher apperceptive level when encysted in and invested with the form of immediacy proper to a lower level (*e. g.*, God = a thing). Take for illustration the case of a man who, really burning with earnestness and enthusiasm, has devoted himself to philosophy and has arrived at a certain insight into the nature of the universe. Then he will sustain a world at a certain level. Now suppose that owing to age or to some other cause he loses his enthusiasm,—then what were for him living

¹ I quote these for purposes of illustration, but I wish to avoid any suggestion tending towards the depreciation of mood and figure, system logic, dialectic, *in favor of* any brand of mysticism, or towards the heresy that opposes system and feeling, head and heart. Spinoza's *Ethics* is quick with emotion.

truths, apperceived in relation to the logical processes which support them and informed by the co-natural love and will, will become mere dead isolated results stranded in memory, and these are no more identical with his former insights than the dead body is identical with the living one.

Distraction (or interference).—According to the Roman Law “*unus homo sustinet plures personas*,” or again Spinoza, “*Idea quæ esse formale humanæ mentis constituit non est simplex sed ex plurimis ideis composita*.”¹ Because of distraction, the mind of a man is more or less like the mind of a committee with the same endless opportunities for cross purposes and misunderstandings. For instance, a man of science in his religious personality may misunderstand and then deny his scientific ideas to protect his religious or political ideas.² A man does not possess his mind entire—he is like the Wizard’s apprentice using the spell. The truths of one impersonation are incantations to another. This distracted character can be to some extent ignored but it can never be obliterated.

Principle of Autonomy (or of Incommensurability).—The continuity of the mind of man or a man, according to the view I have taken of it, is like that of a stream, on the surface of and within the depths of which are eddies, backwaters, vortices, ripples, each of which has some degree of separate continuity and self-containedness. Again the main stream is in one place, on one cross section, flowing faster, in another slower, in one place smoothly, in another rippled, here a streak of clear and there a streak of discolored water. The flowing of these minor streams corresponds in my simile to the logical expansion of individual minds or of menticles, and by the principle of Autonomy I mean that an idea is true in so far as it is a genuine logical expansion and that it ought not to be (indeed cannot be) judged in respect of its conformity with either other ideas or experiences. Its meaning is its logical expansion, it speaks its own untranslatable language. There is a sense surely in which we may use

¹ *Ethics*, Part II, Prop. XV.

² Goldsmith asked to explain his own line “alone, unfriended, melancholy, slow,” did it so haltingly that he was corrected by Dr. Johnson with a “No Sir, it means,” etc.

(though not necessarily in his meaning) Spinoza's words and say "He who has a true idea knows that he has it," *e. g.*, *what I mean* by the existence of God or free will or the heinousness of sin, or love as stronger than death, or the glory of science, or of democracy, is a fact of my experience as much as the existence of pain or pleasure. Moreover, it is a fact which cannot be translated into any other terms.¹ What I suppose throughout is that an idea has a natural tendency to expand itself towards reality (which is the same thing as to rise in apperceptive level), a tendency comparable to the tendency of a seed to grow into a plant, the truth of an idea is what it expands into, and *if* the process which connects the initial idea and the expanded idea is an untainted logical expansion, *then* the expanded idea solves the problem which the initial idea sets and this solution is not subject to review.

Principle of Irreplaceability (irreplaceable hæcceity).—By this I mean that no symbol can be an adequate representative plenipotentiary of the thing symbolized, and in particular, that the ideal experiment of inference, though it generates reality, cannot bind any other reality than what it generates. Just as the projection of the surface of a sphere on to a plane involves distortion and falsification, so all representation involves falsification *because of the reaction of the new medium on what is transferred to it.*

*Principle of Convergence.*²—This is the half truth complementary to the Principle of Irreplaceability. By it I mean that the higher apperceptive level tends to contain the lower. I say 'tends to contain' because so far as the higher level is one of two of which the other is the lower, they are two of a class and each counts as one according to the Principle of Irreplaceability. I call it the Principle of Convergence because according to it the solipsistic truths of the Principle of Autonomy, according as they

¹ *Vide* Principle of Irreplaceability below.

² "Quæ ita continuo convergunt ut citra infinitatem distent dato minus, ea in infinitum continuata censenda sunt æquilia." Quoted from Wallis's *Algebra* by Gratry, *Logique*, Vol. I, p. 46. It is by the principle of convergence that we are able to transcend solipsism or animal automatism. Other men behave more as I behave in proportion as I correct for differences between their situations and mine. Correspondence of structure carried to the limit equals identity of content.

are raised in apperceptive level, converge together, each tends to become all the others without going beyond the limits of itself.

The Principles of Irreplaceability and of Convergence are related in this way. Begin from the denial of external relations (which like all truths is a half-truth¹ in the sense of being self transcendent, for we cannot deny the unmeaning), then this denial of external relations can be worked as it were from either end. John and Peter are both men. We can either take their common manhood and consider it as unifying their John-hood and Peter-hood which we then treat as moments or differences within the universal man, or we can take their difference and consider this as distracting their identity, *i. e.*, the common manhood of John and Peter can be taken up into two individual manhoods, man-John-hood and man-Peter-hood.

Action and re-action are equal and opposite; if John's manhood is something to him, he correlatively must be something to it. It can integrate him with, he equally can differentiate it from, Peter. It is as legitimate to regard John's manhood as a difference within the universal John-hood as to regard John as a difference within the universal manhood.

The Principle of Irreplaceability says John is just John and not Peter, and Peter is just Peter and not John. The Principle of Convergence says in so far as John is man and Peter is man, John is Peter and Peter is John.

*Principle of Ineffectuality.*²—I believe myself to have something

¹ Not more than *half* (or some other fraction) truths, but not less than half truths. Also the principle of ineffectuality is *correlated with our place in the universe*. It is a *significant*, not a *mere* ineffectuality.

² 1. What I infelicitously christen the Principle of (finite) Ineffectuality gives the inner reason why philosophy "beats in the void its luminous wings in vain." What promises to be the ascent of the mind to God proves to be its exhaustion into a bare identity. If sensations without conceptions are blind and conceptions without sensations are empty, it is clear that in so far as we cease to be blind we become empty and *vice versa*. The main suggestion of this essay is, to put it quite crudely, that there is a certain critical point of dialectic advance (the position of which is determined mainly by race experience) between pure sensation and pure conception at which the maximum noetic value is obtained. The real worlds of Democritus and Hume have meaning because sensation contains *nascent* ideas. The ideal worlds of Plato, Hegel, Spinoza have content because thought contains vestigial contingent matter. Each therefore profits by illicit and unacknowledged infiltrations. Between the two the Theistic world of Aristotle and of Christian Scho-

to contribute towards the solution of this ancient antinomy. If a principle applied to impossible conditions yields impossible results precisely because of the impossibility of the conditions, then, applied to possible conditions it will yield true results (*i. e.*, is true). If I had any mathematical knowledge I could perhaps illustrate this by constructing antinomies for dwellers in Flatland, and by them showing these antinomies to be nothing but the logical expansion of the initial impossibility of Flatland. If *posito impossible sequitur quodlibet*, then if '*quodlibet sequitur*' it is a proof that '*impossible ponitur*.'

If '*ab esse ad posse*' is a good process, so is '*a non posse ad non esse*.' If a mathematical formula is applied to impossible conditions it 'talks nonsense.' If our logic yields antinomies it is because it is applied to impossible conditions. That we really are, that we have true being and not a mere succadaneum of being, here is the impossible supposition which breaks the back of every inference so that in the universal disconnectedness '*sequitur quodlibet*.' If our equations talk nonsense it is because we refer them to an impossible origin—ourselves. '*Actio sequitur esse*'; 'to know we should have to *be* and then *we* should not exist.

Spinoza appears to me to be the thinker who has most closely appreciated this point of view.¹ His *Ethics* is, as I understand it, a large scale expansion of the view that the antinomies of our human thought are the projection of the antinomies of our human being. He tells us,² "Intellectus actu finitus aut actu laticism, in which God is neither *only* Cor Cordium nor *only* Rex Regum, yields the maximum of noetic satisfaction on the man Plane of Mind. But the sciousness of this world is *consequent on*, rather than a *consequence of*, the striving of reason.

2. I have no space in which to illustrate this principle, but I will allow myself to advance here that it necessitates the application of this same distinction between consequent and consequence to (a) any advance by way of inference—the premisses of a syllogism bring about, in this mind or that, but they never necessitate the conclusion; (b) any synthesis by way of judgment—any connection is synthetic in so far as it is loaded with irrelevancy.

S is *P* can always be analyzed into two concretions and an identity. $S = Ax$, $P = Ay$. *S* is $P = Ax$ is Ay . Not identity *in* difference but identity *and* difference.

¹ The recurrent Quatenus . . . eatenus, *e. g.*, Mens nostra quatenus intelligit æternus cogitandi modus est.

² *Ethics*, Part I, Prop. XXX.

ininitus Dei attributa Deique affectiones comprehendere debet et nihil aliud." For how can we comprehend the unintelligible? So far as we *want* to know we *lack* knowledge. So far as we *lack* knowledge we lack the conditions under which knowledge is attainable. Again Part II, XLIV, "De natura rationis non est res ut contingentes, sed ut necessarias contemplari;" therefore it is 'de natura rationis' not to be able to make an object of, nor therefore a problem of, nor therefore to find a solution for, 'our world' as such. When it has become intelligible it has ceased to be 'ours.' We cannot connect the problem and the solution together in one field of intellectual vision, because we cannot come within sight of the solution without *eo ipso* losing sight of the problem.

Other applications of the Principles of Irreplaceability, Autonomy and Convergence are such as these—I set them down at random merely to illustrate. That all abstraction or all representation involves some degree of falsification. That any philosophy in becoming consistent with itself becomes consistent with every other self-consistent philosophy. That any theory thought out to its last consequences becomes identical with the being of which it is the theory and clothed with all its affections (*i. e.*, facts and theory converge and at the limit become identical). That ideal representations, memories, or imaginations of actions or desires are not adequate to the corresponding realities; thus, for example, the student's imagination of a life of affairs which provides the matter for his philosophy of a life of affairs is schematic and inadequate, so that it is necessary to take part in any life in order to understand it. If the saint cuts off his right hand he must not expect to have it. So also the metaphysician's idea of the specialist's knowledge, the blind man's idea of color, are all improper or inadequate, not all to the same degree but all in the same way. If 'tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner,' it is precisely because 'comprendre c'est presque devenir complice.' To understand is to impersonate. To understand completely is to be identical with. No idea which is not extended into action and into conation can be the same as any idea which is so extended. The faith without works is

not the same as the faith with works for the works react on the faith. If the French and English language were each separately improved till each became identical with the perfect language (which could not be *a* language at all) they would in the end become, and in the process converge towards becoming, identical with each other.

If the geocentric and heliocentric astronomies were each refined upon till each saved all the phenomena, they would become identical—as indiscernibles. If materialism were thought out, the word 'matter' would in the end support the same world and *elicit the same emotions* as the words 'God' or 'the Absolute.' In proportion to rise of apperceptive level, the symbols employed tend to the position of becoming accidents, so accidental that they do not effectively exist as such. The system more and more determines and is less and less determined by its separate elements.¹ To illustrate this accidentality—If one man says that 'God is a person,' another that He is 'that than which no greater can be conceived,' another that He is the 'Shadow of a great Rock,' another that He is 'a Consuming Fire,'² all these men mean the same in so far as these propositions sustain the same world, *i. e.*, the same or tending towards sameness in logical structure, action-stimulus, affective-tone, scale of values. A materialist will not say, I believe in God, any more than an Englishman as such will say 'Credo in unum Deum,' but in proportion as each completes his world, their differences will tend towards becoming mere differences of notation. Remember, however, that *quite* the same thing cannot be expressed in two ways, differences are therefore never *mere* differences of mind language.

It is possible to say that theism is the real truth about the universe under the same sort of reserves as it is possible to say that red is the real color of a dress—that is, it is the index color, the color to standard eyes under standard conditions. Theism is the natural and best mind language for men because its symbolism is congruent with the natural nisus of the human intelligence towards substantiation and the best human experience is

¹ Finally it would cast off that vestigial remnant of negativity which makes it a *system*.

² See the Bible quotations in Berkeley's 'Siris.'

invested in it. Just so, color is the best expression of beauty for a painter, and sound for a musician. But for this individual man or that, a passage from theistic to pantheistic notation may mark an intellectual and moral advance, so also may a passage from thought to action or to the æsthetic or mystic attitude. And even in conduct the worse may be on the path between good and better. Suppose it is objected: The dress must have some one real color and there must be some one real truth about the universe whether we recognize it or not. I reply—The judgment 'the dress is red,' at the highest apperceptive level (*sub specie æternitatis*) involves and sustains all reality. It does not deny, but it implies the blueness of the object under certain conditions of light (specified exhaustively within the judgment).

So far as different men have different minds (and this is so the more, the lower the apperceptive level) no more than a blurred¹ generic truth known to all men is possible; but so far as men rise in apperceptive level they all tend to participate in one mind knowing one intelligible. Speaking formally, the Absolute can be conceived as God or as anything else whatever so long as the conception is under the form of aseity, because all conceptions and all things conceived, so far as under this form, are identical. But the third grade of knowledge (Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva*) is not an actual possession for man at any time, and though all conceptions converge *in this* and are therefore all equally true *at this* level, because at this level any truth sustains every truth, yet if we fall away from this level as we habitually must, the case is widely different. If I may speak for myself, my experience when I try to realize Mr. Bradley's or Spinoza's world is this—I can see that the main features and the scale of values correspond with the features and the scale of values of theistic reality, each with each, but I find the notation charged with misleading associations, through the impregnation of my mind by the common social mind.² For instance, I find the denial that the Absolute is personal obstinately striving to involve for me the denial that the more spiritual is the more real, or again, though

¹ 'All men' on this level have but a blurred generic *existence*.

² Therefore theological orthodoxy is, and ought to be, a science of case law and precedent, of adhesion to consecrated, and avoidance of contaminated, phrases.

I may understand what Spinoza meant to mean by denying 'intellect in act' of God (*i. e.*, as he explains he denies intellect in so far as it is not will, etc.), yet the moment I cease to devote my whole intellect to sustaining this conception, it tends to degrade into something *epistemologically equivalent* to 'God is material.'

A very pregnant saying of that acute philosophical thinker, the late W. K. Clifford, has always stuck in my memory. It runs somewhat as follows: "I am a dogmatic nihilist and shall say the brain is conscious if I like, and in doing so I am as ideal as possible. A true idealism does not need to be stated, and conversely an idealism which can be refuted by any significant collocation of words must have something wrong about it." It is plain, is it not, that a truth which is so true as this—"that it cannot be refuted by any significant collocation of words"—has over-shot the mark and is not significant, nor therefore true at all?

To Sum Up.—I agree that theism or any *system*¹ displays an instrumental character, but I do not agree that it involves a surrender of the rights of the intelligence to the heart or to desire. My position is rather this—That if one made a characteristic curve of the path of the human intelligence, then the ordinate of this curve giving the highest noetic value or the greatest amount of wisdom would be that drawn from the point on the base line marked, 'Theism.' I mean that the noetic ordinate values on either side of this point, that is, towards Pantheism on the one side, and towards Sensationalism on the other, shrink asymptotically towards zero.

At 'Theism' each factor of wisdom taken separately is not necessarily at a maximum for all men, in all moods, yet on the whole, and in the long run and for the typical mind at its habitual thought-action-conation level, their product is at maximum value.

In the earlier part of this paper, in dealing with the principle of

¹ Any *system*—see footnote on p. 498. (System is not yet purged of negativity or nonentity). I should like to say of Monism what Mr. Bradley says of Eclecticism: that for it "every truth is so true that any truth must be false." Who does not see that such a monism "inhuman, incompetent, impracticable" (Mr. Schiller) would sustain *more* truth if it grasped at *less*. I had some inclination to entitle this essay "Theism as a *Via Media*."

autonomy, I was led rather to dwell on what may be regarded as its sceptical side. But it has a positive side also, for it provides the formula by which we can protect the systematic synthesis of human history, human science, human aspiration, thought and experience (the content of which it entitles us to read into perfection) from attack from the outside.

If and in so far as we have, in union with the common social mind—the implementation of the word—been ordinately affected by all relevant considerations,—then the logical position we come to rest in, should be treated as final. It may not be the necessary synthesis, but it is the outstanding or surviving synthesis. On the other hand, the content of this synthesis as a whole is not commensurable in respect of certainty with that of any particular item of scientific or historical knowledge.¹

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¹ I think perhaps I can now give a more precise conception of the Curve of Noesis. Thus—Theism will be the characteristic immediate (p. 492) corresponding to the culmination of this curve when Reality is viewed in the medium of (*i. e.*, under the form or attribute of) totality. If any more restrictive form is applied, a corresponding variant of the immediate will result. (*E. g.*, Reality under the form of extension may appear as something equivalent to a closed mechanical system.) Thence while, as richer and more concrete, the world of theology will dominate (Principle of Convergence) the worlds of common sense and of the various special sciences, it will not (Principle of Irreplaceability) absorb them—they will each have a certain degree of autonomy. Therefore, the constitution of the sciences will be a sort of federal monarchy as contrasted with pragmatic anarchy on the one side, and monistic autocracy on the other. Correspondingly, in religion, on the man plane of mind we must compromise by dividing the responsibility for events between nature *and* God: but for God or for the Godlike it would be nature—in God.

As the human is to the divine type of intellection, so is an Aristotelian Pluralist Realism to a Platonist Monist Idealism. Atomism at one end and Monism at the other end of the dialectic scale enter our minds with a refraction which renders them false. Monarchical Theism is true for the human mind because it is correlative to the natural receptivity of the human mind.